



## Being a Working Hoosier Mom No easy thing.

by Indiana Lt. Governor  
Becky Skillman

As one of millions of working Hoosier moms, I can say from experience that parenting is no easy thing. It is not for the faint-hearted, but even though it is a lot of work, it is also a lot of fun and very rewarding. Raising a healthy, well-rounded child is the best contribution any Hoosier can make to Indiana. My son Aaron is now 27 years old and I couldn't be prouder of the man he has turned out to be.

When he was born, I was already a full-time elected official in Lawrence County. He was a huge blessing to us because for a long time, we thought we might not have a child. Aaron was born one day before our 10th wedding anniversary and, he was one celebrated little baby. He was the first grandchild on my side, and one of many on my husband's side. We had the best of both worlds in our hometown of Bedford, with a big family nearby and lots of love to give him.

I worked for many years as the County Recorder and County Clerk, all the time taking great pleasure in baking cupcakes for class parties, serving as a "room-mom" and chaperoning field trips. I remember one day in particular when I took a troop of little boys to the

opera at Indiana University. You'd think little boys and opera wouldn't mix, but these boys surprised me. They proved to me that when you expect good things from kids, they can and will meet your expectations. They were terrific. I have so many memories of Aaron's childhood—great memories of just being my son's mom.

In 1992, things got a little more complicated. I went from being a local elected official to being a State Senator. When the Senate was in session, that meant commuting, and I drove from Bedford to Indianapolis and back every day for several years. My family didn't require that of me. I just wanted to be home, so I chose to commute.

It was not easy. There were many times when we were stressed and spread thin like millions of other Hoosier families all over the state. I could not have done it all without an extremely supportive spouse. Steve took a full and equal share of the parenting duties, and we supported each other as a team. That made all the difference for me. I think I would have had a very different life, if he had not been there by my side.

We just did our best with what we had, and we tried to raise a son who had a lot of different experiences, who was interested in what is going on locally, nationally and globally. For us, that meant making some sacrifices to start him off right in school. We sent him off to kindergarten when the time came, and my husband and I agreed that he needed to be in school all day. We knew he could do it, and we knew it would give him a leg up on his education. So

we put him in a program called "kinder-college." It met in the afternoons, after regular kindergarten was over, and Aaron thrived in it.

I know firsthand that full-day kindergarten can be a great advantage for Hoosier kids. That's why the Governor and I are pursuing it. We want all Hoosier children to have that opportunity, if they choose. We have proposed phasing in voluntary, full-day kindergarten over the next three years, starting with our most needy students and eventually including all students. We want all Hoosier children to have every chance they can to succeed, from their first taste of kindergarten until their graduation day.

For all I tried to instill in my son, he has given me a few lessons as well. I suppose 27 years of mothering gives me some ground to give a little advice. It's simply this—be wise, because your children are always watching you, and they are learning how to be a man or a woman by imitating you. I remember a few years ago when I was talking with my son, and I was surprised to hear him rattle off a studied political opinion.

It was a total shock to me that he had taken an interest in government and politics. It was a powerful, but pleasant surprise to hear him restate the very principles I stood for as a legislator. Aaron was a smart, precocious little boy, and he has grown into an intelligent, successful man. I love him dearly, and I wouldn't trade a single night at home with him and my husband for all the galas and late night Senate sessions in the world. 😊